A case study: Institutional Factors Affecting Lecturers' Research Engagement in A University in Mekong Delta region, Vietnam

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Abstract

This case study investigated institutional factors affecting university lecturers' research engagement in a multidisciplinary higher education institution in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. The study employed the interpretive qualitative case study approach with the use of three data collection tools (document analysis, surveys, and recorded semi-structured interviews). In this paper, the authors presented the findings of document analysis and the recorded semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that institutional factors affecting lecturers' research engagement in this studied university included governmental policies, funding and structure, resources, teaching loads, leadership and research environment. The paper suggested some recommendations to foster the lecturers' research engagement in this university.
Keywords: *institutional factors, leadership, research engagement, research environment, teaching loads*

1. Introduction

Academic research carried out by university lecturers has contributed to countries'development, particularly in the time of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education (HE) numerous studies on academics' research have been undertaken in western HE contexts which can be classified into studies of academics' research perceptions and studies of factors affecting academics' research productivity. However, a small number of studies on academics' research capacity and HEIs' research capacities have been conducted in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese Government has attempted to develop its HE system to contribute to the success of its national development. Over a decade of years, the Vietnamese Government has issued a series of research related policies and put a greater investment into the development of its HE system. However, the research capacity of Vietnamese HEIs has considered lower than that of other ASEAN countries (Huynh, 2016).
In this paper, the authors aimed to provide a case study's findings about institutional factors influencing university lecturers' research engagement in a multidisciplinary university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.

2. Literature review

The literature shows that factors which have substantial effects on the research productivity and their research engagement include academic disciplines (Jung, 2012), intrinsic and extrinsic personal factors [individual level] (Chen et al., 2006; Chen, Marry, Ashok, & Leon, 2010), institutional and leadership characteristics [institutional level] (Bland et al., 2005), social and community factors (community level) and national policy factors [national level] (Moore, 2015). Becher and Trowler (2001) reported that academic discipline is considered an important factor affecting academics' research productivity and their research engagement.
The literature indicates that academics' research productivity is considerably affected by their individual characteristics. Numerous studies, including Chen et al. (2006), Fabel, Hein, and Hofmeister (2008) and Hardre et al. (2011), have divided individual characteristics affecting academics' research productivity into intrinsic and extrinsic factors.
Intrinsic factors include demographic characteristics, personal traits, knowledge, and experience. Academics' positive personal traits and their knowledge and experience were seen as significant factors that make them become productive researchers. Chen et al. (2006), and Chen et al. (2010) found that the factors related to academics' personal traits included intelligence, insight, creativity, curiosity, self-competence, self-motivation, recognition and being respected in the field, ambition, and the need to collaborate with others. For example, Hunter and Kuh (1987) found that to be productive knowledge producers, individuals need to "be creative, confident, sensitive, curious, open-minded, flexible in thinking, intellectually playful, willing to work long hours, over periods of time." (p. 444). Likewise, Wood (1990) claimed that ability, creativity, motivation, self-discipline and ambition were regarded as factors to vary academics' research productivity. Additionally, academics having a strong desire for achievement, recognition, capability, a need

for curiosity, and following the research field are productive researchers (Chen et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2010; Hassan, Tymms, & Isamil, 2008; Jeans & Murphy, 2009). Sarunya (2008), using a qualitative multiple-case study involving leaders from 11 faculties in a Thailand university, claimed that self-motivation was the elemental factor to encourage academics to do research. Bland et al. (2005), Dundar and Darrell (1998), and Hardre et al. (2011) commented that university academics naturally have such personal traits, but those who have positive personal traits are more likely to become productive researchers in their career. Other intrinsic factors such as knowledge and experience were found in the studies of (Blackburn, Bieber, Lawrence, and Trautvetter, 1991; Hassan et al., 2008; Hunter et Kuh, 1987; and Sarunya, 2008). For instance, Hunter and Kuh (1987), and Sarunya (2008) agreed that knowledge and experience greatly affected academic research performance. Sarunya (2008) found that skills and experiences – the two elements in a group of the essential factors known as the career development factors – motivated lecturers in selected universities to engage in research. Other elements in the group of essential factors included attitude, academic origin, tenure status, and level of qualification. Similarly, Jones et al. (2003), exploring general practitioners' research training needs and the barriers to involvement in research, found some participants admitted that they lacked specific research skills and considered the lack of these skills as a barrier to undertaking research. However, Chen et al. (2006) stated that the effect of knowledge and experience on academics' motivation to conduct research was not clear.

Extrinsic factors such as promotion, finance, tenure, teaching loads, and research networks have been considered to have a substantial impact on academics' research productivity and research engagement. For instance, Chen et al. (2006) mentioned that tenure and promotion were potential motivators for research productivity. Similarly, Tien (2008) claimed that there was a close link between publication and promotion in many current instructional policies; more publications entailed promotion and an increase in income. Furthermore, examining 82 university educators' engagement with and in educational research, Borg and Alshumaimeri (2012) found that undertaking research helped the participants to get promotion. It is understandable that when a university lecturer gets promotion, he/she will be more respected and powerful in the organisation, and have opportunities for a higher income.

Institutional characteristics which include institutional faculty/department size, revenue amount, the availability of technology and facilities, and resources such as books, journals in the library, institutional culture, working conditions, workload policies, the availability of leave and travel, research funds, and the availability of leading research academics are considered as significant factors affecting academics' research productivity (Bland et al., 2005; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012; Creswell, 1986; Dundar & Darrell, 1998; Huang, 2014). For instance, Fox stated that research productivity was affected by structural aspects of researchers' working environment such as the capability of the training institution, the prestige of the institutional affiliation, and other features of institutional location. Dundar and Darrell considered that a programme and department with a larger number of academics was a better predictor of publications. Creswell (1986) stated that the culture of a department or institution was an important factor in determining individual academics' research performance. Creswell added that institutional characteristics contributing to academics' research productivity included the employment of a reward system in performance-based management (tenure, promotion, salary increments), the employment of a financial support system for academics' research engagement based on their attaining success in concrete indicators (the number of publications, book awards, research grants), and the use of quantifiable forms of recognition. These criteria not only influenced promotion decisions, but also reinforced future academic research and attracted more research funding (Braxton, Luckey, & Helland, 2002; Fairweather, 1993).

In conclusion, numerous studies indicate that academics' research productivity has been influenced by different factors. They include academic disciplines, individual characteristics, institutional characteristics, and leadership characteristics. Particularly, when academics have more positive individual characteristics, and more positive points of academic disciplines, institutional characteristics, and leadership characteristics, their research productivity is much better. Bland et al. (2005) summarized individual characteristics, institutional characteristics and leadership characteristics that affect academics' research engagement and their research productivity. The three groups of influential factors can be seen from Figure 1.

Figure 4. Model of the individual, environmental, and leadership factors affecting the faculty's research productivity adapted from Bland et al. (2005, p. 227)

Similarly, in a study of factors affecting people's health, Moore (2015) says "the world we live in influences on us" (p. 1) and suggests a socio-ecological model indicating that people's health is influenced by different levels of factors, including individual, interpersonal, organisational, community, and public policy factors (see figure 2).

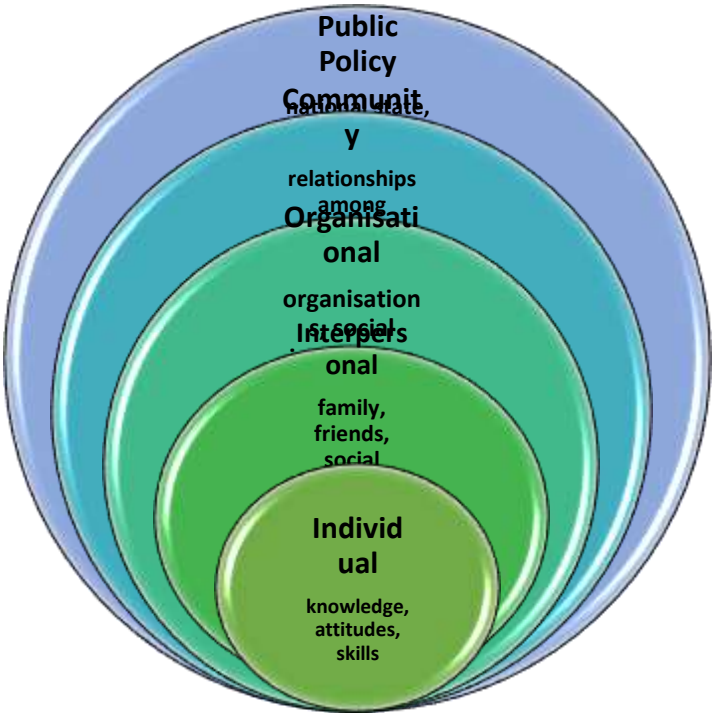


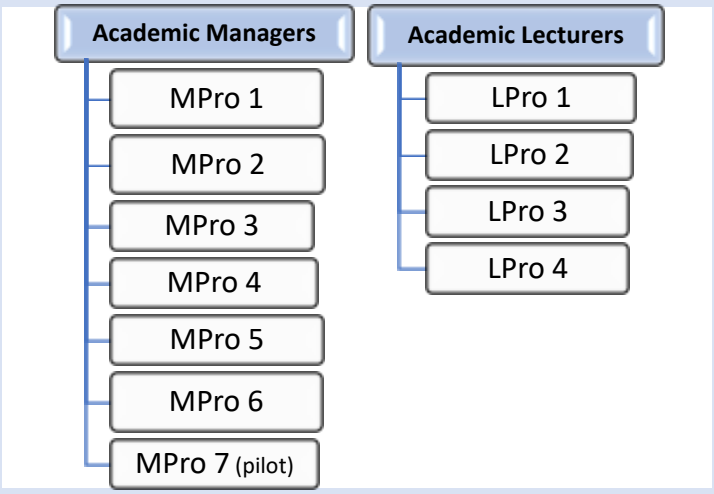
Figure 5. Social-ecological model: Looking beyond the individual adapted from Moore (2015, p.1)

Background of the institutional case study

The university in this study was developed from its local province's Teacher Training College and became the first provincial multi-disciplinary university in the south of Vietnam, which was founded in 2000 in accordance with the Prime Minister's decision. It had seven faculties: the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, the Information Technology, the Faculty of Technology and Environment, the Faculty of Law and Political Studies, and the Faculty of Tourism, Culture and Arts. Besides, it had nine support service units, a multi-level School for Pedagogical Practice, and a Central Library. There were 834 persons: 413 academics in eight faculties, 197 supportive staffs in functional offices, and 224 staffs in eight professional service units. Among them, there were 56 PhD degree holders and 434 MA degree holders (including 52 managerial staff in offices and faculties because their backgrounds are also academics) (The Personnel Office, 2017). This institution's research participants consisted of 37 survey participants and 10 interview participants. The interview participants included six academic managers, one of whom was a PhD holder, and four academic lecturers (one of them holding a PhD degree

Table 1. The University's Population of Participants

Survey Participants	Interview Participants

Surveys delivered	**40**	

3. Research methods

This study employed an interpretive qualitative multi-case study approach, consisting of three institutional case-studies. However, in this paper, we just extracted one case study of the research. There were three data collection tools employed in this case study, and they were described briefly as follows:

- *The survey*

The survey consisted of two main parts. Part One asked about background information of the respondents including the institution name, the discipline/faculty, position, qualification degree, and academic ranks and titles. Part Two included items that explored participants' research perceptions, the factors affecting either positively or negatively their research engagement as well as their research and PD activities. The survey was delivered to 40 lecturing participants to explore their research perceptions and factors affecting their professional development activities and their research engagement.

- *The individual semi-structured interview*

The individual semi-structured interview list comprised 16 questions (questions 1-13 for academic managers and academic lecturers, and questions 14-16 for academic lecturers) was employed as a major data collection tool. This tool helped explore the participants' interpretations of research perceptions, motivational factors in research, research practices, organisational cultures, and research management policies and strategies. Through interviews, the investigator also gained insights into institutional/departmental practices that affected academics' research capacity and PD activities.

- *Document analysis*

The third data collection tool was document analysis. The collected documents comprised governmental and institutional documents related to research development plans and polices. Governmental research development policies consisted of:

- The Government's Resolution 14 **"***Substantial and comprehensive renewal of Vietnam 's tertiary education in the 2006-2020 period***"**
- The Central Executive Board's Resolution 20 "building Vietnamese labouring class in the period of accelerating the state's industrialisation and modernisation"
- The Prime Minister's Decision 418 "Strategy for science and technology development in 2011-2020"
- Vietnam's university charter in 2010
- Vietnam Law on HE in 2012
- Vietnam's Law on science and technology 2013
- Project 322 "Training scientific and technical staff overseas by the state's budget"
- Project 911 "Training Vietnamese academics at HEIs to obtain PhD degrees abroad for the period 2010-2020**"**
- Project "Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system, period 2008-2020". (Huynh, 2016, pp. 50-51)

After collecting all data from three sources, this case study he analytical framework for exploring factors affecting the research capacities of Vietnamese HEIs and their academics' research engagement in this study is built from Bland et al.'s (2005) model of factors affecting the faculty's research productivity, Chen et al.'s (2006) framework of factors

affecting academics' research productivity, and Moore's (2015) social-ecological model. This analytical framework is used for analysing and discussing data in the following parts.

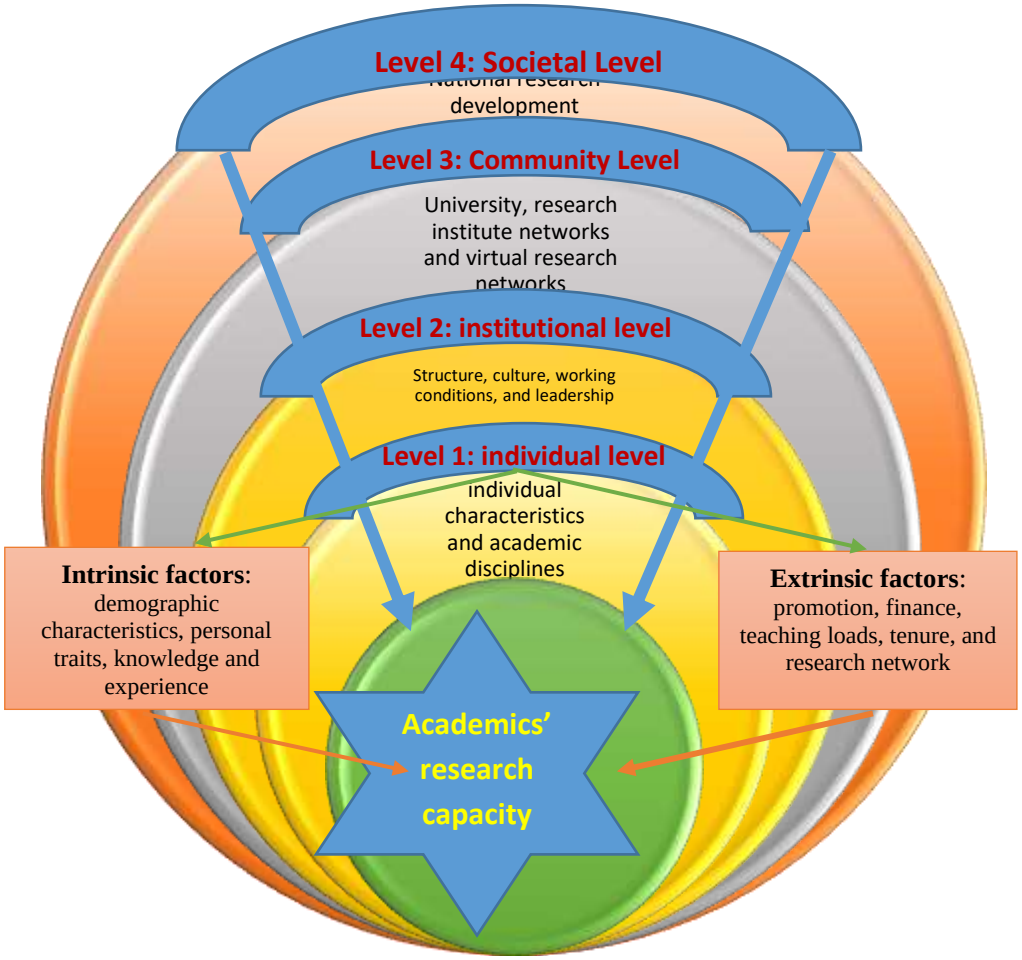


Figure 3. The analytical framework for exploring factors affecting Vietnamese academics' research capacity [adapted from the models suggested by Bland et al. (2005), Chen et al. (2006), and Moore' (2015)

4. Findings and discussions

In this paper, in addition to the findings of various factors affecting individual academics reported in my PhD thesis, we merely indicated institutional factors impacting lecturers' research involvement. They included institutional policies, funding and structure, resources, teaching loads, leadership, and the research environment.

4.1 Institutional policies

In line with the trend to refresh Vietnamese HEIs in order to improve regional and international integration effectively, raised by the Vietnamese Government and Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), this provincial multidisciplinary university had to supplement and perfect its institutional policies to improve its research capacity in recent times. Specifically, it promulgated some regulations such as the internal expense regulations in the year 2014, tasks in the academic year 2014, and its developmental strategy in the period 2011-2020 and vision until 2030, which were mostly related to university lecturers' PD and research activities. However, the payment for institutional research projects, according to this provincial institution's internal expense regulation 2014 was still unchanged in comparison with the amended internal expense regulation 2012. Table 3 shows the research payment for its academics. The internal expense regulation 2014 had not been updated the exchange from standard research hours to standard teaching hours. It did not have a specific convertible table for teaching and research hours if academics had conducted their higher level research projects or had their papers published in national and foreign journals. It also did not provide clear instructions on how many hours of research are needed to be done by individual academics with different degrees. A new thing that could be found in this document is to have an increase in payment for teaching hours for all academics in terms of their qualifications and seniority at work. For instance, lecturers with a salary code plus management

position allowance (2.34 – 3.33) in 2012 were paid 60,000 VND (equivalent to $3 USD), and in 2014 they were paid 75,000 VND. However, the teaching payment for lecturers done before the year 2014 generally relied on an academic's salary code and management position allowance, not on their academic degrees. The form of payment was actually seen as a barrier to stimulate lecturers to upgrade their qualifications and to engage in research activities.

Table 2. The university's comparison of research payment in 2007-2014

Internal Expense Regulation 2007		**Amended Internal Expense Regulation 2012**				**Internal Expense Regulation 2014**					
Faculty level Project	Institutional level Project	Faculty level Project	Institutional level Project			Faculty level Project	Institutional level Project				
10	**20**	**10**	**30**			**10**	**30**				
			Ranked Type				Ranked Type				
			A	B	C		A	B	C		
			30	28	25		30	28	25		
Counting units: million VND (20,000 VND = $ 1 USD) **Since 2012, the payment has not included the payments of approved research proposal and acceptance of completed research project.**											

In summary, this university was in the phase of perfecting its research document policies at the time of this research. It commenced to introduce some documents related to its future development strategy. However, most changes in these policies centered on teaching payments, not on research payments. It did not have specific reward policies although it encouraged lectuerers to participate into research activities as mentioned in its academic tasks in 2013-2014. It was documented in this institutional plan that academics were encouraged to conduct provincial, and ministerial level research projects, and participate in cooperative research projects. The institution continued to amend and supplement previously issued documents associated with research activities in order to create favourable conditions for academic lecturers to engage in research. Research would soon be considered as a criterion for evaluating academics' capacity. For these reasons, it could be implied that this HE institution's research capacity was still limited.

4.2 Funding and structure

Research funding is a vital element contributing to a university's research strength. However, the findings seemed to indicate that this institution's research funding was limited, and procedures to get research grants was actually problematic. It seemed that this university mostly relied on its own institutional research funding. Based on the Vietnamese Government Decree 43/2006, Vietnamese HEIs had to allocate 4 million VND per annum (equivalent to 200 USD) for each academic to undertake his or her own research (Vietnam Government, 2006). Therefore, the local government annually provided the research funding for the institution with the approximate amount of 3 billion VND (150,000 USD) because the total number of staff was 765. This institution seemed not to have any other sources of research funding because the documentary results indicated that for nearly 15 years of operating as a university, it did not have any provincial, ministerial, and national level research projects. There were merely eight completed local research projects, and five projects funded by TRIG Project. As seen from Table 3, there were 78 institutional research projects conducted from 2006 to 2011, which meant that this institution spent around 1.5 billion VND[1] – half of the annual research funding provided.

Table 3. The University 's research funding spent in 2006-2011[2]

Accounting unit: billion VND

Year Budget	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**Total Spending**
Expected budget for research	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**18**
Real Spending	78 research projects X 30 million VND/1 research project = 2.34 billion VND. On average, annual research spending was 0.39 billion VND						2.34

[1] Each institutional research project is granted with 30 million VND. 78 research projects x 30 million VND = 2.34 billion VND

[2] The university's report on the management of scientific research activities

This finding indicates that the institution did not effectively use its research funding in past years. However, surprisingly, a majority of participants (both academics and academic managers) commented that they felt unhappy with ways to access research grants, and to get research payment for their finished projects. For example, one academic manager participant admitted that:

> One reason that causes academics not to actively engage in research activities is the grant for a research project is limited (30 million VND/a project). In addition, the complicated financial procedures to pay for researchers may make them disappointed. (**MPro 1**)

Another academic manager considered that there should be a change in the approach for the financial research allocation. He suggested that:

> There is only 30 million VND funded for a project. How can academics want to conduct such a research project? If conducting research due to their duties, they may implement a project with that amount of money, but surely with a low quality project. (MPro 2)

Sharing the idea of MPro 2, LPro 2 suggested that the grant for an annually institutional research project should be increased by four or five times.

Related to procedures for getting research grants, the survey result indicated that 32 out of 37 respondents strongly agreed that the procedures were complicated and time consuming. MPro 7 commented that it was strange that researchers had to buy expense receipts to give to the Office of Finance to indicate that they had conducted research. He questioned how academics had to do 'such strange things'. Similarly, MPro 5 expressed that although he often conducted research projects, and often worked with the staff in the Office of Finance, he still felt disappointed about how they operated. He believed that other academics who started conducting research would also feel disappointed. He commented that:

> We are academic researchers. We feel heavy headed with our research work. It would be appropriate for them to give us specific guidance about the procedures, but in practice they often have a negative attitude to create more difficulties for us. (**MPro 5**)

To sum up, this provincial HE institution had limited research funding as it mostly relied on its institutional research funding. There were no other financial sources. It thus seemed hard for lecturers to access research grants and receive reasonable research payments. The finding showed that annually the institution did not use up all its research funding. This could be because the institution made use of such research funding for other institutional activities such as to upgrade its teaching facilities and improve training programmes

4.3 Resources

Research resources in this institution were believed to be limited. Thanks to the TRIG Project (2008-2012), laboratories for the Faculties of Education and Agriculture and Natural Resources were built and other research equipment was provided. However, identifying the important role of the library to teaching and research activities, the institution's management board attempted to build its 'E-Library', a network of computers connected with the Internet. It was seen as the second university in the Mekong Delta region to have a modern library. Nevertheless, some participants considered that this e-library did not provide enough research books and materials for its lecturers to research. For instance, MPr 7 stated that although the library annually bought books according to its purchase plan, and necessary books for research could not be found in the library. Related to research facilities, the survey results showed that 33 out of 37 respondents agreed that their institution had quite limited research facilities.

In conclusion, it is undeniable that sufficient research facilities greatly contribute to a university's research strength. Still, this university's research resources were limited. Therefore, it is undoubtful that the limited research resources in this university resulted in a negative impact on its research capacity.

4.4 Teaching loads

Teaching loads was seen as a negative factor towards the institution's research capacity. In general, this provincial university's academics had heavy teaching loads. They not only taught regular classes at university but also classes of continuing education – namely in a *work and stu*dy (part-time) form. Many academics agreed to have more teaching hours to increase their income and to replace their compulsory research hours. The MOET's regulation 64/2008 on *university academics' work time* states that academics have to fulfil their standard teaching and research hours in an academic year. Their research hours equal half of their teaching hours. This document also mentions that if academics do not conduct research, they have to do extra teaching hours to substitute for their research hours. It means that lecturers must teach for an extra 140 hours if they have no research project in that year. Table 4 shows academics' standard work hours in a year.

Table 4. Vietnamese HE academics' workload framework

Lecturers' Titles	Framework for standard teaching hours	
	General requirement for all disciplines	Physical Education and National Defence & Security for non-majoring institutions
Professors & Advanced Lecturers	360	500
Associate Professors & Senior Lecturers	320	460
Lecturers	280	420

(Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, 2008b)

In this institution, a large number of lecturers had heavy teaching loads whereas very few lecturers engaged in research activities. Most participants agreed that it would be simpler and more comfortable to perform extra teaching hours than to conduct research because when conducting research, they faced many difficulties such as low research income, hard to gain research grants, complicated procedures for receiving research payment, and lack of research facilities. Another reason for their heavy teaching load was their institution's development strategy for the previous 10 years. It seemed that this university had a greater focus on expanding its scope for training than on research activities. For instance, in the first academic year of 2000-2001, it had only five university-level disciplinary training programmes, but presently it had 29 regular university-level disciplinary and 12 college-level disciplinary training programmes[3]. Additionally, it had eight university-level disciplinary training programmes and four master-level disciplinary cooperation training programmes. Therefore, lecturers had to perform more teaching hours than before to increase their income, entailing that they had limited time for research and this seemed to impact on their research motivation. To sum up, academics' heavy teaching loads in Case One negatively affected both their research engagement and the institution's research capacity. Reasons for their heavy teaching loads came from the view that earning money from teaching was easier than from research. In addition, some barriers such as unavailable research grants, insufficient research facilities, and complex research payment procedures hindered them from engaging in research. To some extent, it seemed that they agreed to have more teaching hours than usual in order to meet their personal income needs and their institution's short-term developmental strategy.

4.5 Leadership

According to the participants, leadership was seen as another negative impact on their research engagement. They said that faculty leaders should be qualified, knowledgeable, experienced, active, and exemplary in research so that the leaders could give helpful advice and have a strong voice in encouraging their academics in research. In practice, many faculty leaders in this institution were not qualified according to the Charter of Vietnamese HEIs issued on 22/09/2010. The document states that faculty Deans and department Heads at universities must be PhD holders who are respected and experienced in teaching, research and management (Vietnam Government, 2010a). For example, one participant commented that:

> *The Faculty of A&NR is stronger in research than other faculties because it had qualified leaders and many doctorate degree academics graduating from foreign universities. Our faculty does not have such conditions*. (**LPro 2**)

At a higher leadership level, MPro 2 considered that the advisory function for the institution's research strategy was not good, although the institution had the Scientific Committee and the Office of Research Management and International Relations. He stated that his institution really lacked a force who could scrutinise research problems. Similarly, MPro 3 considered that this Office only performed well in its affairs of international relations and administrative management. He said that:

> *The Office of Research Management & International Relation needs a person who is experienced in research. This will help the office work better. (***MPro 3***)*

To sum up, in the previous short-term developmental strategy, Case One's leading management board was a focused on expanding its training programmes and encouraged its academics to be responsible for extra teaching hours. As a result, its recent research capacity was quite limited. Moreover, for some participants, their faculty leaders and head of the Research Management and International Relation Office were still not qualified in terms of their academics' titles and research experience. This actually did not motivate academics to engage in research. Therefore, for leadership to enhance its research capacity, its leaders needed to pay attention to the afore-mentioned issues.

4.6 Research environment

[3] The University's development strategy in the period 2011-2020, and its vision towards 2030 (a draft version)

The research environment in this university was not considered to be positive for involving its academics in research. There were several causes; first as afore-mentioned, it did not have many qualified, leading, and experienced academics in research. Thus, it rarely won any important provincial, ministerial, or national research projects. It seemed that the provincial authority gave this institution some priorities to conduct provincial research projects. In addition, due to a very small number of experienced research academics, it had not been able to attract private and state enterprises to invest in its research activities in recent years. This greatly weakened its research networks.

Secondly, it appeared that the local authority had little confidence in its academics' research capacity. Therefore, the officials in charge of scientific research affairs in this province mostly invited academics from other major universities to conduct its important provincial socioeconomic development research projects. For this reason, this university's research funding seemed to be very limited.

Thirdly, due to limited finance and networks in research, it seemed that there was no choice but to accept heavy teaching loads instead of research. As a result, they had very little time for research and their research competence, by nature, was not strong, in fact it became weaker.

Furthermore, this institution had organised very few workshops and conferences related to research development activities in recent years. It did not create good opportunities for its academics to participate in related research conferences held in other institutions so they could improve their research competence. This issue was shared by one participant:

> *The university has not given financial support for academics to take part in conferences organized in other universities for two recent years. Academics have to use their own money to attend such conferences. By such doing, the university has reduced opportunities for academics to address new research ideas.* (**LPro 2**)

To sum up, like other institutional factors, the research environment in this institution was in fact not good for its academics to engage in research. This was caused by unfavourable conditions in relation to the number of qualified academics, research networks, and research finance.

A summary for findings and discussions

It appeared that several institutional factors had negatively impacted this institution's academics' research engagement. It was noted that elements such as not updating institutional policies, limited leadership, inexperienced research workforce, limited financial research and research links, complicated research payment procedures, and heavy teaching loads were major institutional factors that possibly weakened its academics' research capacity. Therefore, to enhance its research capacity, there should be positive changes towards such institutional factors.

5. Recommendations

From exploring the findings of this institutional case study, it was found that there were several institutional factors that negative impacts on its academics' research capacity. They included institutional policies, funding and structure, resources, teaching loads, leadership, and its research environment had negative impacts on its academics' research engagement. Thus, the authors suggested recommendations to enhance the academics' research engagement in this institution:

Firstly, as Vietnam's MOET has attempted to classify its higher education institutions into three groups: (i) research-oriented institutions, (ii) research and practical-oriented institutions, and (iii) practical-oriented institutions. This institution's vision is to become an institution in Group Two until 2025. Thus, it needs to have some positive changes into its institutional policies and documents so that it can encourage the academics to actively engage into individuals' and collectives' research activities. Specifically, its institutional policies should have a greater focus on the development of research productivity rather than teaching activities, which means that it forces academics to undertake research and put research activities into annual evaluation criteria for academics' work. Last but not least, its institutional policies also should reasonably increase financial payments for academics joining in research activities.

Secondly, the institution needs to explore more capitals to upgrade its research infrastructure such as the digital library and a broader range of digital research resource books and links for academics to search for their studies. It also needs to buy new research facilities to replace out of date ones in experimental research laboratories so that it can help a comfortable ease for academics' research work.

Thirdly, it is essential that the institution create a favorable environment for academics to engage into research activities by providing flexible time and finance for academics to join domestic and international research and professional development workshops. Furthermore, for the element of leadership in research activity, the institution should strongly appoint qualified, ethical and knowledgeable academics to be leaders of research and training units.

Fourthly, this institution ought to strengthen the link between university's training and research and industry's and community's needs. By doing this, its academic research can be used to applied in workplaces and communities' needs. Then, it can mobilize a greater capital for conducting further meaningful studies in the future.

Last but not least, it is important that this institution need to organize more international workshops for enhancing their academics' research capacities. It also needs to establish interdisciplinary research groups and expand international research and training collaborations to develop its research capacity.

6. Conclusion

The paper presented academic lecturers' research engagement of a higher education institution in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam during the time of competitively broad and deep integration that domestic and foreign higher education institutions have attempted to enhance their research capacities and to position themselves in the domestic and foreign university's ranking. There are a variety of factors impacting academics' research capacities; however, this paper merely reported institutional factors affecting the research engagement of lecturers in the studied university. Then, it provided some recommendations for enhancing this institution's research capacity in the present time of regional and global integration of higher education.

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